The hero award is given to animals who have saved or preserved human life.

2011 - Buddy

Don Miller of Grantsburg owes his life to his 11 year-old yellow Labrador, Buddy. As a sensitive-detection dog, also referred to as a “seizure dog,” Buddy helps Don every day to avoid injury, or worse.

Buddy is specially trained to be able to detect a change in smell due to an altered chemical balance in Don, which occurs about ten minutes before a seizure. When he detects a change in smell, he alerts Don. In the eight years that Don and Buddy have been together, Buddy has made over 300 detections.

When Don experiences a seizure he becomes disoriented and completely unaware of his surroundings. Because of this, Buddy’s abilities are crucial to Don and his everyday life.

One day, Buddy took his responsibility to another level as he saved Don’s life. As the pair began walking a few blocks from their home, Don started to have a seizure as he and Buddy were crossing the street. Instantly Buddy went into work mode and pulled Don across that street, and another, until the pair was in the parking lot in front of their apartment. As Don regained consciousness, he realized what Buddy had done and knows that Buddy saved his life that day.

Over the years, Buddy has lifted Don’s self-esteem. Buddy allows Don to live with more confidence because Don knows that Buddy will be there to alert him of coming seizures. Buddy is a constant friend and hero to Don.

Buddy was nominated by Dr. Gregory Palmquist, Grantsburg Animal Hospital, Grantsburg.

2010 - Bud

Bud, a black Labrador Retriever, saved the life of his long-time friend and owner, Carol Heule of West Bend, during a horrific accident.

Cleaning her boat and preparing for winter storage, Carol fell onto her paved driveway on Oct. 7, 2008, breaking her neck on impact. Conscious, but unable to move, Carol knew she needed help quickly and said “Bud, you have to get me help.”

Immediately Bud began howling and barking. Bud’s consistent barks alerted Carol’s neighbors who found Carol and called 911. She was transported to St. Joseph’s Hospital in West Bend and then via Flight for Life to Froedert Hospital in Milwaukee.

At her arrival at Froedert, a team of 20 doctors were awaiting Carol’s arrival and said rarely, if ever, has anyone arrived alive after breaking the second cervical vertebrae.

After Carol was released from the hospital, she was in a brace from the top of her head to her waist. Bud continued to be of instrumental help; including aiding and guiding her up and down the stairs.

Bud has also been very active as an American Kennel Club (AKC) Hunt Test Dog. Bud was the youngest dog to achieve the Master National Retriever Club Plate in 2001 in Oklahoma and has qualified to attend the Master National every year since 2001.

Bud has also given demonstrations at the Safari Club International Youth Day and for the Turkey Federation.

Bud was nominated by Dr. Eric Stephenson, Mayville Animal Clinic, Mayville.

2009 - Peaches N' Créme

Peaches N' Créme, is an eight-year-old Maltese, belonging to Marla Brabander of Iron River. Marla's daughter Andrea, who is diabetic, had just arrived at Marla's winter home in Texas. Because of the long trip from Wisconsin, Andrea was tired, and immediately went to lie down for a nap. Marla also had a long day, and decided to lie down as well.

After a short while, Peaches began barking and jumping all over Marla, to wake her up. Peaches lured Marla into Andrea's room, where Andrea was found to be in a diabetic coma. Not having any emergency shots for this type of situation, Marla immediately called 911. Thanks to Peaches' special awareness and persistence, Andrea was quickly on her way to the hospital where she was revived. Peaches had saved Andrea's life.

It is now common for Peaches to sense when Andrea's blood sugar is too low or too high. When Andrea is warned by Peaches, by scratching and pawing at her legs, Andrea will check her blood, and Peaches is always right. Marla considers Peaches to be her little miracle dog.

Peaches N' Créme was nominated by Dr. Monica Brilla of Northland Veterinary Service in Iron River.

2008 - Stasha

Carol and Bill Joseph thought they were lucky when they brought home Stasha, a wildly energetic and affectionate ball of silver fur. They found themselves to be especially lucky on the

day their home caught fire.

On the morning of Sunday, February 11, 2007, Bill left early for work as Carol continued to sleep in, along with Stasha. Sometime later, Stasha repeatedly began nudging Carol with her nose, persistently trying to get Carol's attention. Finally Carol opened her eyes and saw flames. An electrical fire had started behind her headboard. At first she tried to put out the fire, but soon realized the fire was out of control. Carol and Stasha evacuated the house immediately.

Although Carol had not been burned, she suffers from Multiple Sclerosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Due to smoke exposure, she had to be monitored closely at the hospital.

During the four-hour firefight, two firefighters needed treatment for minor injuries. The Josephs suffered more than $120,000 of damage to their home, but consider themselves lucky, as the situation was very close to being much worse.

Due to her medical conditions, Carol sleeps with a tank of oxygen next to her bed. Their bedroom is also directly above the garage, where they store a number of additional oxygen tanks. Somehow in spite of all the fire damage, not one tank exploded. Carol is certain that had an explosion occurred, their neighbors homes would have been involved in the disaster, and many people could have been hurt.

S*tasha was nominated by Dr. Brenda Johansen of Harmony Pet Care in Waukesha.*

2007 - Sadie

There is no way Melvin Reiten could have predicted the loyalty and dedication of Sadie, a Shepherd/Collie mix, when he brought her home from an animal shelter in 2003.

One day in March 2004, Melvin was felling damaged trees near his home. Sadie was by his side, hoping to lend a paw with the task at hand. Suddenly a large chunk broke off the top of a tree, hitting Melvin's lower back and crushing six of his vertebrae.

For over two hours Melvin was in severe pain, trapped against the cold ground by the large tree.

During that time Sadie made several trips back to the Reiten home, incessantly barking to get the attention of Melvin's wife, Annie. It was some time before Sadie succeeded in getting her attention.

Upon returning from each trip to the house, Sadie would lick her master's face to keep him conscious, and push her snout under his chin to keep his head out of the snow. However as time went by, Melvin became increasingly despondent. In Melvin's own words: "I just knew I was going to die, and I gave up. But Sadie wouldn't let me."

Thankfully Sadie was eventually able to get Annie's attention, who then called 911 after discovering Melvin's predicament.

Melvin was flown by helicopter to St. Luke's Hospital Intensive Care Unit. Both of his legs were paralyzed, and extensive reconstructive surgery was necessary. Melvin still gets around in a wheel chair, but everyday he is grateful for his faithful friend Sadie, who would not let him give up.

 Sadie was nominated by Dr. Steve Meyer of Willow Animal Hospital in Ashland.

2006 - Spike

The story of Spike's heroism centers on his best friend, 12 year-old Cody Sullivan. Cody is a "special needs" boy who was born with an atrial septal defect that was repaired with open-heart surgery when he was two-years-old. What the Sullivans did not know was that Cody also had a rare, life threatening, neurological condition.

On a night in March 2002, Cody's parents Shawn and Angie awoke to Spike in their bedroom crying and whining at their bedside. This was unusual, because he had not awoken them at night since his potty-training days, and very rarely came up the stairs where the bedrooms were located. Angie tried to calm Spike and send him downstairs, but he was insistent. Spike led her to Cody's bedroom. Once there, Cody slowly awoke. He was disoriented and complained that his head hurt and that he could not move the left side of his body. It seemed that Spike knew Cody needed help.

Because of Cody's past medical history, the Sullivans immediately took him to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Once there, Cody was diagnosed with a rare condition called arteriovenous malformation that had burst, resulting in bleeding of the brain and stroke-like symptoms. Cody was put into intensive care and eventually placed on life support. The doctors told the Sullivans that Cody might not survive the night. The bleeding and swelling in the brain was so severe, that had Cody gotten to the hospital just 10 minutes later, he certainly would have died. Spike had saved Cody's life.

Cody had surgery to repair the malformation and made a miraculous recovery, spending the next eight weeks in the hospital. All the while Cody was anxious to see his dog, and Spike visited Cody's bedroom often, looking for his friend. Once Cody was home, Spike rarely left his side, sleeping outside his bedroom door. It seemed Spike believed that he could watch over Cody better than anyone else.

The amazing story continues in April 2003. Cody started having seizures, and doctors believed this was due to scar tissue from the previous surgery. Cody was started on anticonvulsants, and soon after Spike also began having seizures. After some diagnostics, Spike was diagnosed with idiopathic epilepsly, and was also put on anticonvulsants. Presently, Cody is happy, seizure-free, and was recently taken off the anticonvulsants. Spike however, still struggles with occasional seizures, despite medication. In 2005, an acquaintance of the Sullivan family, who claims to have pet-psychic powers, said that she believed Spike was taking the seizures from Cody onto himself. Whether this is possible is open for debate, but it is undeniable that dogs have incredible perceptive powers, whether it be sensing fear, danger, or the next weather front. Spike knew something was amiss that night in March 2002, and he made sure his friend Cody got the help that he needed.

Owner/caretaker: Shawn Sullivan
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Bradley Osgood, Brentwood Animal Hospital, Oak Creek

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2005 - Lucky

Arlene Winchell, of Pardeeville, has Multiple Sclerosis, uses a wheelchair and depends on her Golden Retriever Lucky to help with day-to-day activities. Lucky's duties include opening and

closing doors, picking up things from the floor, and even fetching a can of soda from the refrigerator when Arlene asks.

But on a late night in March 2004, Lucky's loyalty to Arlene was proven through an act of heroism. On what was an ordinary evening, Arlene fell asleep in her living room while watching TV. Around 1 a.m. she was awoken by Lucky firmly nudging her arm. Arlene immediately knew something was wrong, because it was much too late for Lucky to ask to go outside. When she wheeled herself out of the front room, Arlene could see flames engulfing the southern portion of her house near her bedroom.

Arlene and Lucky were able to make their way to the garage, and both got in her handicap accessible van. Without a second thought, Arlene put the van in reverse and backed straight out of the garage – and straight through the garage door!

After calling the fire department, Arlene could only sit and watch the fire consume her home. Damage was estimated to be $179,000 and firefighters were on the scene for roughly five hours.

Portage Fire Department Inspector Craig Ratz explained Lucky's heroism from his own perspective: "It is evident to me and the entire department that Lucky is a very special dog. The Portage Fire Department is indebted to Lucky, because he prevented firefighters from doing what they work so hard to avoid… recovering a victim who has perished from the wraths of fire."

Owner/caretaker: Arlene Winchell
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Sandra South, Poynette Animal Hospital, Poynette

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2004 - Golly, Lily & Double

On November 8, 2003 Tammy Ogle of Marshfield was traveling on Highway M through the Chequamegon National Forest in Taylor County. Riding along in the back of her SUV were her Labrador Retrievers, Double and Golly, both three-years old, and Lily, one-and-a-half. Tammy

lost control of her vehicle as she was approaching a narrow bridge. Her SUV struck the bridge, flipped and rolled multiple times, ejecting Tammy through the passenger window.

Double, Golly, and Lily managed to escape from the wreckage. Tammy lay unconscious with several injuries, including 10 broken ribs, three facial fractures, and severe head injuries. Double stayed by her side as Golly and Lily ran a half-mile down the road to the nearest house. A man came to the door after hearing Golly and Lily's scratching and barking. Golly tugged his sleeve to get him to follow out to the road. The man saw Tammy's overturned SUV in the distance and quickly called 911. An ambulance arrived and transported Tammy to the nearest hospital.

Tammy's condition was so severe that the doctors immediately had her sent by helicopter to a larger hospital that had a trauma unit with brain injury specialists. Tammy would not have survived without her dogs' loyalty, persistence, and sense of urgency.

Owner/caretaker: Tammy Ogle
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Roger Krogstad, Wildwood Animal Hospital, Marshfield

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2003 - Hoss

Seven-year-old Travis Thannum, along with his family and best-friend Cassie, had been watching four-wheel drivers riding through the mud on a Saturday afternoon. Travis, who was told by his parents to stay near-by, hopped on his four-wheeler with Cassie to go to the house for some food. Hoss, a Labrador retriever and Travis's constant companion followed closely by. While riding, Travis tried to avoid an area of mud, veered off course, over a bank, and into a nearby pond. Travis could not swim and quickly slipped beneath the water. However, Cassie managed to stay afloat and called Hoss into the water. Cassie managed to climb onto Hoss's back as he carried her safely to shore, where she was then able to call for help. Hoss immediately returned to the water and began to circle around the spot where Travis had gone under.

Help quickly arrived and Travis's unconscious body soon rose to the surface, face down. Those who were present began resuscitation. Before long, Travis was on his way to the hospital, with most people fearing the worst. However, shortly into the ride, color began to return to Travis's face as he slowly came around. Today Travis is happy, healthy and feeling as lucky as ever to have his loyal companion Hoss right by his side.

Owner/caretaker: Chris Thannum
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Gary Sloniker, Spooner Veterinary Clinic, Spooner

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2002 - Libby

Libby's story is a real testimonial to the refined senses that alert animals when things aren't quite as they should be. No one knows how Libby sensed the danger to her neighbor's life that cold winter night.

What we do know is that Libby persistently tried to wake her owner Sandy late that night. In deep sleep, Sandy resisted, but Libby persisted by nudging her arm repeatedly until she awoke. Once awake, Sandy saw an urgency in Libby as she ran to the door and stood next to it barking. Knowing this was not part of Libby's usual behavior, Sandy got up and let Libby go outside. Libby ran next door and stood barking somewhere where Sandy could not see her. She did not stop barking until she finally persuaded Sandy to follow her.

When Sandy finally found Libby, she was standing next to the 83-year old man who lives next door. He was lying helpless and frightened and half-frozen on the ice-covered walk. He had fallen on his icy walk, could not get up, and could not get help. No one but Libby knew he was there, and no one was likely to find him until the next morning. Had it not been for Libby, the man could have succumbed to hypothermia.

Owner/caretaker: Sandy Horstmeier
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Jodi Bearman, Middleton

2001 - Rocky

A five hour search party of 100 people: firefighters, emergency medical teams and a Coast Guard helicopter rescue team could not find 2-year old Marilyn who had wandered away from a Memorial Day party. Fortunately, Rocky, a German Shepard detective led his partner, Newtols, to a dangerous spot where rescurers had not looked because they doubted any tot could navigate that terrain. There was Marilyn, cold and wet, standing in waist-high water, but fine.

Owner/caretaker: Deputy Tim Newtols
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Nick Vukich, Green Bay

2000 - Duncan and Elizabeth

Duncan and Elizabeth saved their owner from fire. On Oct. 27, 1999, Laura Henderson was sleeping in her apartment when a fire started raging through the complex. Duncan and Elizabeth, Henderson's 13-year-old domestic shorthaired cats, started throwing their bodies against a door that separated them from Laura. The noise woke her and when she went to see what was wrong, she saw her back door completely ablaze. With one cat under each arm, Henderson escaped her apartment, which was totally destroyed by the fire.

Owner/caretaker: Laura Henderson
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Grant Olson, Sturgeon Bay

1999 - Oscar

When Oscar, a Golden Retriever, woke Gina's teenage daughter early one Saturday morning, she was quite annoyed. And when she went to complain to her mother, she found why the dog had bothered her. Gina was acting very strangely, and upon getting her to the hospital, it was discovered she had three cerebral aneurysms. Oscar stayed by her side through her recovery as well. He could sense when she might be having a seizure, and he would sit on her lap to restrain her and keep her safe.

Owner/caretaker: Gina Bembenek
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Philip Schoenborn, Mukwonago

1998 - Rowdy

On a cold October morning, Arthur Majeske, 90, was working near his woodshed and fell between two large pieces of wood. He could not move and had lost feeling in his right side. Rowdy, his beagle, stayed with him for nearly 20 hours before a neighbor found him. Doctors said the sharing of body heat saved Majeske's life.

Owner/caretaker: Arthur Majeske
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Douglas Morrison, Crivitz

1997 - Loie

Loie, a professional service dog, awoke early one morning and sensed there was a problem. Her owner, Todd Palkowski,who has muscular dystrophy, was in extreme respiratory distress. Despite the fact that he was unable to give her a voice command, Loie went to alert Palkowski's live-in care provider to call for emergency help. In addition to being a hero, Loie is a loyal companion and helper who has raised Todd's independence, confidence and self-esteem.

Owner/caretaker: Todd Palkowski
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Claire Rojohn, Hales Corners

1996 - Thunder

Following a robbery suspect across a frozen river, the ice gave way and Deputy Stanley Wontor slipped backwards under the ice. He called out "pull" (a command Thunder, a police dog, had not been trained to use) and Thunder pulled him out of the freezing waters to safety.

Owner/caretaker: Deputy Stanley Wontor
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Douglas Morrison, Crivitz

1995 - Elvis

Elvis and his owner, Mark Thompson, were sleeping soundly when Elvis detected something wrong in the house. He awakened Mark who discovered the house was in flames. Smoke was three feet down from the ceiling. Both Elvis and Mark searched for Sterling, Elvis' 5-month-old Great Dane "nephew." The house was completely destroyed, but thanks to Elvis, Mark and Sterling were unharmed.

Owner/caretaker: Mark Thompson
Nominating veterinarian: Dr. Andrew Turner, Chetek